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Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research

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Press ICW96/2

Attention: Embargoed for Monday, October 28, 3 p.m. EST

RESEARCH GROUP HONORS SIX WORLD FOOD PRIZE LAUREATES

Washington, DC, Oct. 28 -- Six out of the twelve eminent international scientists who were awarded the World Food Prize since it was created ten years ago were selected for their successful work at and with research centers of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR).

"The World Food Prize is the foremost international award recognizing outstanding individual achievements in improving the quality, quantity, or availability of food in the world," according to former U.S. President Jimmy Carter, a member of the Prize's Council of Advisors.

In a special ceremony during the CGIAR's 25th anniversary celebration, the Group today honored the six CGIAR prize winners. "We are extremely proud that half of all World Food Prize laureates have been selected from among CGIAR researchers. This means international recognition of the excellence of the scientific work of the 16 international agricultural research centers supported by the Group," said CGIAR Chairman Ismail Serageldin at a special ceremony during International Centers Week, the annual Washington meeting of the world's largest international research consortium.

"We are happy that four of our six laureates can be with us here today. They represent not only the best of 25 years of CGIAR work: they stand for the world's best agricultural science, for many small and big research successes that started with the spectacular breakthroughs of the Green Revolution of the 1970s and 1980s and continue today with cutting-edge biological pest control and super high yielding cereal varieties," said Mr. Serageldin, who is also World Bank Vice President for Environmentally Sustainable Development.

"When honoring our six laureates I should also mention Dr. Norman Borlaug, the eminent U.S. wheat breeder whose high yielding wheat varieties, developed at the International Center for the

Improvement of Maize and Wheat (CIMMYT) in Mexico, brought him the Nobel peace prize in 1970. I dare say that the achievements of these seven current and former colleagues are but the tip of the iceberg of CGIAR research, and that there are many other excellent scientists among the 880 international researchers currently working at the CGIAR centers whose contributions to sustainable food security and poverty alleviation will never become known outside their peer groups -- unless they become laureates themselves," the CGIAR Chairman said.

The U.S.\$200,000 World Food Prize was awarded to:

1996: Dr. Henry M. Beachall and Dr. Gurdev S. Khush, rice breeders whose work has revolutionized Asian agriculture, improving the diets and the environment for literally hundreds or millions of people.

Dr. Beachall is a U.S. rice breeder whose most significant achievement was his role in the development in the 1960s of IR8, a semi-dwarf rice developed at the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) in the Philippines that far surpassed the yields of traditional Asian rices.

Dr. Khush, an Indian national who now heads IRRI's breeding program, introduced IR36, one of the most widely grown food crop varieties in the world. he is now developing another set of rice varieties dubbed "super rice" which have the potential of increasing yields by an additional 25 percent.

1995: Dr. Hans Herren, a Swiss national, developed the Africa-wide Cassava Mealybug Control Program -- one of the largest of its kind -- which not only saved Africa's staple crop but brought the use of biological pest control to the forefront of agricultural science. The program, developed at the International Institute for Tropical Agriculture (IITA) in Nigeria, rapidly brought the mealybug problem threatening 34 sub-Saharan countries under control, prevented the large-scale use of pesticides and safeguarded the basic calorie supply of 200 million Africans.

1990: Dr. John F. Niederhauser, a U.S. national, was honored for his innovative leadership in advancing the production and consumption of the potato. Under his guidance, Mexico increased its potato production sixfold between 1950 and 1980. He cooperated in the development of strong national potato programs in other developing countries. These activities led to the

founding of the International Potato Center in Peru, in 1971. Dr. Niederhauser is best known for his research to control Potato Late Blight which first devastated Ireland in the 1840s.

1988: Dr. Robert F. Chandler, a U.S. national who was the founding director of the International Rice Research Institute. Under his leadership, IRRI's scientists developed rice varieties for the tropics that had double and triple the yield potential of traditional rices. The Indian Council of Agricultural Research said of him: "His contribution lies not only in the practical applications of science for human welfare but in the evolution of a pattern of research administration conducive to research becoming an instrument of progress in the developing nations."

1987: Dr. Monkombu S. Swaminathan, an Indian plant breeder, widely recognized as the architect of the Green Revolution in India which radically improved agricultural yields through the introduction of genetically superior grain varieties pioneered at CGIAR research centers. This work helped pull back India from the brink of famine and dependency on food aid and become an exporter of rice. Dr. Swaminathan was Director General of the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI).

The CGIAR is an informal association of 52 governments of industrialized and developing countries, international organizations, and private foundations supporting an international research system for agriculture, forestry, fisheries and management of natural resources in developing countries. Its goal is to contribute, through research, to sustainable agriculture for food security in the developing countries.

The World Bank, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) jointly sponsor the CGIAR, which maintains 16 international research centers with a consolidated budget of \$300 million, some 880 senior scientists and a total staff of 10,378. In 1996, CGIAR celebrates the 25th anniversary of its establishment in 1971.

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